

- (16) NYAWINO. Like the Nthira but does not grow big and is of a darker colour. Inhabits the Lake and rivers. Edible. 136
- (17) NDERA. Small fish found in the rivers.
- (18) OMENA. A very small silvery fish caught in traps in the Lake. —*Engraulis cypris*.
- (19) OYORA. Said to be the young of the Ngege.
- (20) OBUDI. Said to be the young of the Mbiru.
- (21) ADEL. A small scaled fish of silvery colour about four inches long.

There are other fish which I have not been able to see and cannot describe, but they are said to live in the Lake and rivers and to be edible. The names given are: Otenda, Adendi, Otengo, Nyangoro, Obu.

I have also seen small eels (Okunga), about a foot long, caught in the Lake. Crabs (Okela) and Oysters, and fresh water tortoise (Opuk) are also found.

For a good deal of the material embodied in this article I am indebted to reports made some years ago by Dr. Orloff and Mr. Blaney Percival and also for figures and information supplied by the Administrative Officers in Central and South Kavirondo and the Superintendent of Inland Revenue and Conservancy. The native names given are Dholuo (i.e., the language spoken by the Jaluo) Kavirondo except where otherwise stated. 138

PRELIMINARY ARGUMENT

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the divergences are glossed over and the relations of segments treated in the same kinship idiom as if the implied regularities had been maintained.

I now proceed to the more detailed description of those features of the Luo family which aid in the interpretation of the lineage system. The lineage concepts of the

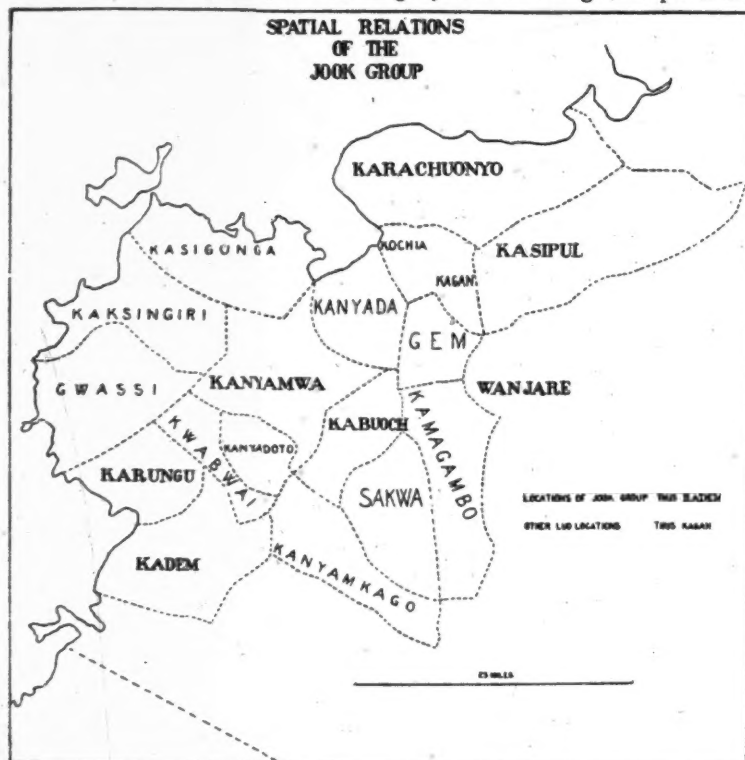


Fig. 3

Luo are then discussed, and six cardinal principles abstracted from them. Some statistics are given to show the divergence of lineage activities from the norms implied in the concepts and from the genealogical structure itself. More details are given of the nature of segmentary activity within the extended family, between the extended families of whose members the smaller lineage segments are composed, and between the larger lineages. Lastly, an interpretation is given of the transformation of class B into class A segments as small landholding lineages, from which

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613 16 LINEAGE FORMATION AMONG THE LUO

128 originate all the larger lineages which provide the political framework of Luo society.

114 My illustrations of Luo lineage structure are taken from material on one large
[613] lineage group, that of Karachuonyo. This group inhabits the present locations of
[124] Karachuonyo and Kasipul, and in 1947 had a population of 90,000. I lived here from
December 1946 till March 1947 and again for the month of September 1947. On each
occasion I took with me a Luo student from Makerere College as interpreter and
research assistant. I went through my material with a dozen or more of the Luo
students at Makerere who themselves came from a number of different locations.
Clearly, from such a short period in the field, my results are not complete, but in
so far as they add to the information at present available, I present them for what
they are worth. The map (Fig. 3) shows all the Luo locations of South Kavirondo,
those of the Karachuonyo group and of the other lineages which claim descent from
the common ancestors, Jook and his wife Awandu, being shown in heavy type.

III. THE FAMILY

[351] THE most prominent cultural features of the Luo landscape are the euphorbia hedges,
at stages of growth varying from that of 3-foot saplings to that of 30-foot trees,
592 dating each site by their planting at the time of first occupation, and throwing a thick
green wall round the cluster of huts within. This residential unit is the *dala* or *pacho*,
and will be referred to as the homestead. The dwelling-huts ranged in a circle round
the inside of the hedge are those of married women, the chief wife's hut being at
the side opposite to the entrance through the hedge, and the huts of subsequent
wives arranged in alternate succession on either side of that of the chief wife.¹ The
husband and head of the homestead divides his time between the huts of his wives,
the chief wife's hut taking precedence,² having no other quarters of his own except
an *abila*, a smaller hut usually in the centre of the circle, which was his only place
[784] of privacy. There is a belief that if the husband leaves the homestead to escape
from the bickering of his wives he will die on re-entering it, and the *abila* provides
him with a safer sanctuary. It was also a vantage point from which he could keep
a watchful eye on his cattle in the nearby kraal. The homestead is the spatial correlate
of the compound polygynous family and is subdivided into the households of its
component elementary families. Just as *dala* or *pacho* applies both figuratively to the
social group and concretely to the homestead occupied by it, so *ot* applies both to
house and to the household of wife and children occupying it. The title of the head
of the homestead and its family group is *wuon dala* or *wuon pacho*; *jaduung* (elder) may
be substituted for *wuon*. Correspondingly, each wife is *wuon ot*, signifying that she is
head of the household, proprietress of its hut and all other effects, and leader of
its domestic and economic activities. The word *wuon* is usually translated as 'father',
and is in fact the classificatory term for all agnates of the generation senior to the
speaker, including the 'genitor'. But its use with reference to all married women,

¹ See Gluckman in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde. The Luo family has a 'house-property complex' of the Zulu type but in a less extreme form.

² This is often striking in ritual. The husband's most valuable possessions are also kept there. With

the present changes in hut design the chief wife's hut is often of the new and more pretentious rectangular pattern, while a second wife's may also be rectangular but smaller, and the third wife's still of the traditional circular type.